

Lark P. Cummings

425-923-5452

330 E Boone Avenue, Spokane, WA, 99202

lcummings4@ewu.edu

Violence, Structure, and Agency in Labor Market Segmentation Among Mexican Migrant Farmworkers

Lark P. Cummings

ABSTRACT

Medical anthropologists have long used the concept of structural violence to investigate the suffering of marginalized groups. Following Paul Farmer (1999, 2004), anthropologists such as Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992), Philippe Bourgois (2001, as well as Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes 2003) and Seth Holmes (2012) have critically analyzed the ways that unfair political economic structures create injury and illness with comparable effects to a gunshot or a stab wound. This research has expanded beyond the concept of structural violence to include a whole spectrum, or violence continuum. As productive as this research has been, it has primarily emphasized patterns of violence that move downwards from social structure, thus leading to an overly deterministic approach that conceals the role of agency. This paper uses the case of the migrant farmworker experience in labor markets to advocate for a renewed analysis of the violence continuum that appreciates the role of violent practices in the production of structure, as well as vice versa, in a process of mutual causality that has not been emphasized. This concept of violence is first outlined in detail, and subsequently explored through examination of labor market segmentation among migrant farmworkers in the United States adding to the work already done by medical anthropologists using the traditional version of the violence continuum paradigm (Holmes 2013).

Introduction

What role does violence play in the construction of labor markets? While historically many forms of labor market construction have involved direct coercive violence, such as slavery, the indirect violence structuring labor markets today often remains unexamined. This paper attempts to utilize anthropological theories of violence, in conjunction with labor market segmentation theory, to explore how various forms of violence contribute to the construction and regulation of labor markets, specifically migrant farm-worker labor markets in the United States.

In the last three decades, theoretically informed anthropological analyses of violence have grown precipitously, in both quality and quantity. In particular, the concepts of structural violence (Galtung 1969, 1975; Farmer 1994, 2004) and the violence continuum (Bourgois 2001; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2003) have had a significant impact in the field, relating different forms of violence (political, structural, symbolic and everyday) to one another and to political-economic structures within (neoliberal) capitalism. Other researchers have successfully drawn on this body of work in their analyses of suffering and violence in myriad field circumstances. For example, Holmes (2013) provides a powerful analysis of health disparities among Triqui migrant farmworkers in the United States, connecting their different kinds of social suffering to their position within an ethnicity- and citizenship- based hierarchy in US farm work. Holmes attempts to show the different forms of violence faced by Triqui migrants, whether it be political violence coming from the Mexican military, structural violence in the form of neoliberal restructuring and ‘free trade’ policies, the everyday violence of racism and subordination within the ethnic hierarchy of farm work, or the symbolic violence normalizing these other forms of violence. He takes care to demonstrate how no individual actor within this system *wills* violence, but rather it is dictated by the structural constraints of the system itself.

Holmes at once refers to the market imperatives of U.S. agriculture, the political violence of the state against the indigenous in Southern Mexico, the decades-long process of neoliberalization in Mexico and the Global South, and the long history of racialization of migrants in the U.S. all as components of the determining structure. While all of these variables are relevant, their precise relationship is underspecified in Holmes' work, and several things remain unclarified. For one, the fact that neoliberal policies displaced indigenous smallholder farmers in rural Mexico does not explain how this was significant to the neoliberal project there, or the mechanisms by which profit is extracted from migrants via their displacement and economic dislocation. Stating that the structural violence of free trade policies is what drives migrant displacement still leaves us asking what structures impelled these economic reforms in Mexico, and to what ends. Whether or not this violence was ancillary to particular labor markets in the neoliberal period, or whether it was merely incidental violence, collateral damage so to speak, is an important question, and one that requires a different kind of approach. One might say that Holmes investigated the role of labor markets in the production of migrant suffering; another question entirely is the role of migrant suffering in the production of labor markets.

The case of Holmes' widely-read study makes a broader point about the operational utility of the violence continuum as a theory with explanatory value. Does this theory have the potential to be more than a taxonomic system for naming different forms of violence, or can it tell us something about why particular kinds of violence happen, and what ends they might serve? In the interest of pursuing the latter, this article proposes the conjunctural use of labor market segmentation theory (LMST) with an augmented version of the violence continuum in order to examine the relationship between different forms of violence and labor market formation. LMST has serious potential in mapping the contours of violent practices as necessary

to the formation of capitalist labor markets. Firstly, it shows violent practices to be a structuring force in their own right, not just a result of structuring processes; many unequal structures could not exist without the ongoing recurrence of violence. Second, it helps show how the precise connections between specific forms of violence and specific market, industrial and labor configurations, such as the unique violence specific to migrant farmworkers in our industrial agricultural system, constitute a structure-violence matrix where both elements interpenetrate and produce one another in specific, historically and geographically contingent ways. Thirdly, LMST gives us insight into the kinds of political action that can seriously hope to ameliorate violence; in other words, what power relations and structures must be altered in order to really undermine extant regimes of violence?

In this paper, Holmes' widely cited study serves as a point of departure from which to explore the relationships between violence and labor markets. As the title of Holmes' ethnographic text makes clear, the fresh fruits available to consumers of U.S. produce come at the cost of the broken bodies of migrant laborers. Using the theories of the violence continuum and LMST in conjunction, we can begin to ask why this deal was struck, how it is maintained, and what the conditions of its overturning might look like.

Theoretical Review

Theories of Violence

One prominent antecedent of many contemporary medical-anthropological theories of violence can be found in the work of Paul Farmer; specifically his use of the concept of structural violence (1996, 2004). While Farmer did not invent the term (that distinction belonging to Johan Galtung, 1969), he did bring it to a new audience and a fertile field of

inquiry. Following Farmer, scholars such as Bourgois (2001) used this violence concept in conjunction with others to develop the idea of a “violence continuum,” in which multiple strands of violent practices interact and mutually influence each other.

Bourgois’ four forms are direct political violence, structural violence, symbolic violence, and everyday violence. Direct political violence refers to targeted, avowed and visible violence, such as military or police repression. Structural violence, drawing largely on Farmer (1994, 2004) refers to “chronically, historically entrenched political-economic oppression and social inequality” (Bourgois, 2001:8). Symbolic violence, developed from Bordieu’s concept (Bordieu and Wacquant, 2004), refers to the misrecognition of social hierarchies as naturally existing and therefore justified, ranging from race and ethnicity to gender. Everyday violence, adapted from Scheper-Hughes’ (1992) work, describes expressions of violence on the daily, interpersonal level which mask structural inequalities.

In Farmer’s work and in the scholarly tradition that followed, including Holmes (2013), structural violence played a key role in highlighting the absence of choice for victims in the emergence of disease outbreaks such as AIDS and tuberculosis. It combatted individualized notions of responsibility for personal health and disease, demonstrating the structural barriers to health faced by vulnerable populations. While of course doing much good in drawing attention to the broad structural conditions leading to negative health and life outcomes in marginalized individuals, populations and nations, the relationship between violent practices and structures remains underspecified, with an implication that violence is performed indifferently *on* victims *by* structures in a unidirectional, top-down flow. Structures do not have agency, however; to attribute violence to structures, as if they exist and can act without the necessary participation of agents, is both strategically self-defeating (a problem discussed further in the conclusion) and

analytically spurious. A multi-dimensional understanding of the relationship between violent practices and social structures is key to understanding why violence occurs when it does, where it does, and how it does, and what consequences it has for social structure.

Violence, Between Structure and Agency

Violent practices do not simply emerge from structures as if acting out a pre-scripted inequality, but rather violent practices (emerging and existing independent of structures) enable the production and reproduction of structures that come to operate through them and depend upon them for their continued existence.

Patterns of violence are constitutive of social structure, but rather than a concrete instantiation of an abstract social reality, these concrete actions are the sites on which abstract social realities are created. They are not direct products of structure, instead emerging from complex interactions of multiple structural fields and numerous agents. Structure is incapable of “doing” anything by itself; it is the landscape in which agents act, and agents may always act outside of, or in opposition to, structures. Outcomes of structure, if they can be called such, are always probabilistic and contingent in nature, never deterministic. Structure *does* provide an evolving context in which violent practices adapt and change, with violent practices in turn feeding into social structure, adapting it, and so on—but at every instance, agents have the choice to act in opposition to structure, rather than reproducing it.

One way of understanding the interdependent quality of violence and structure is in terms of existential imperatives. As social structures emerge, for example, markets, they do so under historically and geographically specific conditions (technology, capital, competition, labor, etc.). As those conditions evolve, a result of any number of factors, structures can be threatened, and

their existential conditions (for example, a segmented labor supply) might disappear. The deterioration of existential conditions can produce any number of outcomes, from the withering of structures to their adaptation. Agents benefiting from certain structural conditions (for example, capitalists benefiting from easily exploitable labor markets) are prone to act in defense of these structures however they can—including violence. This too, though, is not predetermined but dependent on the agency of the actors in question, and could always be different.

Adapting the Violence Continuum

Whither the violence continuum? To better capture the relationship between violence and structure, the concepts of structural violence and the violence continuum must be reworked to some degree. One important observation is that political, everyday and symbolic violence are themselves clearly structure-producing and -shaping phenomenon, often rather important ones. Given this fact, what was called structural violence in Bourgois' model must be understood very differently. For Bourgois and others, the importance of structural violence was to emphasize the indirect consequences of inequality, which have effects tantamount to the violence of a gunshot or stab wound. The distinction between this kind of indirect violence and other, more clearly visible forms is still desirable and necessary. However, this should obscure the fact that direct, symbolic and everyday violence, as well as indirect violence, are fundamentally structural in that they *produce* structures. To that end, what Bourgois called "political" and "structural" violence, shall instead be called here direct and indirect violence, terms which accurately reflect the differences between the two.

To reiterate, direct violence is visible, avowed, and acknowledged, while indirect violence is invisible, disavowed, and, if acknowledged, naturalized and politically neutralized. These two form the primary tier of violence, with everyday and symbolic violence forming a

secondary, or reactive, tier, seeing as they by definition emerge in circumstances where primary tier violence has already taken place. Each of these four kinds of violence has the capacity to structure social relations, doing so to different degrees in different contexts. For this reason, structurality may be conceived as being a kind of continuous variable that all forms of violence possess to greater or lesser degrees, rather than a categorical *type* of violence. Calling a form of violence structural ought to be a statement about its *relations to specific structures*, not a quality of the practice itself. This does not mean that violence only exists in relation to a particular structure, only that we must be precise when we speak of the structural quality of violence. While distinctions of terms such as these may seem trivial, recognizing the structuring qualities of all modes of violence is critical to the project explored here, and continuing to use a unidirectional and simplistic concept of structural violence is an impediment to those goals.

Labor Market Segmentation Theory

Theories of labor market segmentation (LMS) date back to the 1950s, beginning with Kerr's (1954) study of internal labor markets. Through several successive generations of theorization, a well-developed body of work has emerged which seeks to reevaluate theorizations of the labor market in a fashion critical of the synchronic and highly abstracted competitive models which define neoclassical approaches (Doeringer and Piore 1971; Gordon 1972; Gordon, et al. 1982; Marsden 1986; Rubery 1992). Following Reich et al. (1973:359), segmentation is "the historical process whereby political-economic forces encourage the division of the labor market into separate submarkets, or segments, distinguished by different labor market characteristics and behavioral rules." While contemporary theories of LMS extend beyond political-economic drivers of the phenomenon, the important claim remains consistent: there does not exist one labor market, regulated by competitive pressures and through wage signals,

but rather several different labor markets, constructed under historically and geographically specific circumstances, each with different rules of engagement and process. Quoting Peck (1996), “[t]he conception of the labor market as a complex, not to say contradictory institutional structure could hardly be further from the neoclassical image of a self-equilibrating labor market in which individual actors pursue rational self-interest within a framework of free competition” (46). Today, multiple causal threads which lead to segmentation are considered important, including the traditional emphasis on institutions and political-economic pressures, but also including such things as the family and the sphere of social reproduction, labor union activity, the presence of marginalized groups in the population, technological development, and much else.

As stated above, LMS embraces multiple causal threads in its understanding of the labor market. These different threads have been grouped by segmentation theorists into three main conceptual categories: supply-side factors, demand-side factors, and state-regulatory factors. Early approaches were limited to mainly demand-side variables, emphasizing technological limitations and industrial development as key variables (Doeringer and Piore 1971). Later theorists, such as Reich et al. (1973) emphasized segmentation as a labor control strategy, and linked it to processes of monopolization within capitalism. By the late 80s and early 90s, without abandoning this earlier work, theorists were drawing on ideas of social reproduction and occupational socialization, as well as state influence. Peck (1996) emphasized the spatiality of segmentation processes as connected with processes of uneven development, highlighting local influences on labor market structures. Altogether, this literature does not form one body of theory, but rather “a cluster of models and theoretical approaches” (Rubery 1992:246). Following Peck (1996), investigation of labor market structures must be done empirically and in

a manner appreciative of the historical and geographic contingencies involved. *A priori* theorization of labor market structures without this investigation of specific conditions is not possible.

A History of Migrant Farm Labor Segmentation in the United States

This section divides the history of migrant farm labor segmentation into two parts, before and after the passage of the IRCA in 1986. To some degree this is an arbitrary delineation, but the IRCA has several advantages as a turning point. IRCA created a new model of immigration policy, in response to a “crisis” of undocumented immigration—an outgrowth of consequences of the 1965 Hart-Celler Act, itself in some important ways influenced by the cultural representations of undocumented migration developed in the days of Operation Wetback (discussed below) and earlier. That said, the IRCA had significant, if unintended consequences for the structure of migrant labor markets, and ushered in a new, if unexpected, regime of migration policy, which would continue through to the present. In order to understand that regime, then, we need to look at the 40 years preceding the passage of IRCA, a period which includes both the Bracero program and its fallout.

The Bracero Program was a two-decade foray into state-managed migrant labor contracting which had profound consequences for all subsequent migration of Mexicans to the United States. Beginning under labor shortages during WWII, the purpose of the initial Bracero Program was short-term in scope. Growers were desperate to find a cheap labor source for the harvest, and were reticent to raise wages, concerned that such wage increases would stick around after the war. At the same time, Mexico was experiencing significant economic disruption for the rural poor, increasingly displaced by modernization projects. The consequent high unemployment was a real problem for the corporatist Mexican state, and the safety valve of

emigration was a tempting fix. In addition to a legal program, the Bracero period also saw the first large-scale flows of undocumented migrant from Mexico to the United States, many of whom were former or future Braceros. Growers often employed a mixed workforce, thus maximizing their flexibility, although undocumented laborers were cheaper and more easily controlled (Henderson 2011). When Bracero contracts were withheld, which happened for many reasons, growers now turned to undocumented labor to fill the gap.

The idea of undocumented migration was still very new in this period, illegal entry having only been established as a crime less than two decades prior (Ngai 2004). There were still no formal quotas on western hemisphere migration to the United States for the entire duration of the Bracero Program. That said, this period did see the first large-scale deportation spree in US history, Operation Wetback (1953-1954), and the surrounding discourses of exclusion. The idea of a ‘wetback invasion’ took hold in the population, and didn’t leave, even after the ‘crisis’ was declared resolved. In reality, many of the deportations which took place were symbolic, a process known as ‘drying out the wetbacks.’ Undocumented workers were taken to the border, instructed to place one foot on Mexican soil, and then welcomed back into the United States under Bracero contracts. For this and other reasons, Operation Wetback was one of the key developments in US migration policy that shaped everything that came after (Mize and Swords, 2011).

Employer control over Braceros was near absolute under the program. In the words of one Texas grower, “we used to buy our slaves, now we rent them from the government” (quoted in Henderson 2011:82). After a brief experiment with railroad work, Braceros were limited to agricultural work. Employer-pegged contracts meant that workers could not switch jobs, and could be dismissed by employers for any number of reasons, from rowdiness to suspected union

organizing. Oftentimes, in camps predominated by undocumented workers, immigration raids were called in just before payday, and the majority of workers deported without wages. Living conditions were squalorous and pay was frequently withheld. In principle, Braceros were supposed to be able to appeal to the US government for such abuses, but in reality this was beyond the abilities of most Braceros. Braceros were also attractive because of their families—still in Mexico, and an anchor pulling migrants back home at the end of their contract. Remittances grew in this period to become one of Mexico's chief sources of US dollars. The separation of the labor process from the sphere of social reproduction (the home) allowed Braceros' families to survive on a fraction of the cost of living within the United States, lowering the effective subsistence wage (Burrawoy 1976).

The formation of a population which people *expected* to be subordinated, including members of that population themselves, was a lasting legacy of the Bracero Program. In addition to fueling xenophobic discourses (such as the “wetback invasion” narrative), people came to associate Mexican migrants with this type of work and these types of conditions. The families of Braceros became connected to parts of the United States they themselves had never been to, and came to expect the lifestyle associated with having a remitting migrant sending home money from abroad. As the children of Braceros came of age, they faced the same expectations. Instead of working traditional family plots, this was the way that work passed from generation to generation—through transnational migrant-employer networks. This development was perhaps the most lasting consequence of the Bracero Program, as it would keep the migration pipelines running well after the Bracero Program itself ended.

In sum: the Bracero Program allowed growers to establish a nearly watertight segmented market, from which migrants could rarely escape. A displaced population with little English

experience or knowledge of US socioeconomic norms was invited far from their homes, to work under tightly controlled conditions, with few rights and no accountability for their employers. Their subordination was legally instantiated, and if they went outside the law, they did not find better working conditions, but worse ones. Moreover, this fed back into the realm of social reproduction, and the children of migrants were often siphoned into the same occupations.

In 1964, the Bracero Program was finally ended. This took place in the context of civil rights legislation in the same year, and the abolition of the 1924 national quota model of migration regulation in 1965. The number of Bracero contracts had at this time been declining for many years, and the undocumented population (greatly reduced under Operation Wetback a decade before) was growing again. Ending the Bracero Program, it was hoped, would moderate some of the extra-legal flows (an idea that seems somewhat silly in retrospect). The 1965 Hart-Celler Act, which overhauled US migration policy, also placed a quota on Mexican migration (something that had never been done before). The result was that legal pathways for Mexican migration to the US dropped to a fraction of their size practically overnight. Naturally, this coincided with the latest round of modernization in the Mexican agricultural sector, known as the Green Revolution, which brought industrial farming south of the border. This model required high capital inputs, irrigation infrastructure, high pesticide and fertilizer use, proprietary seed genetics, mechanization, and a reduction in agricultural employment. This kind of development drove rural inequality through the roof, and the only available solution to lost livelihoods for many was migration, now largely the illegal kind (Barry, 1995).

Migration in the post-Bracero period was defined by the twin dynamics of economic stress in Mexico and tightening hostility in the United States. Growers, of course, were anything but hostile, and fiercely argued their right to use migrant labor (Henderson 2011). By this time,

Mexican labor had been integrated into agriculture for so long, that there was no domestic labor force capable of filling the gap—that is, unless wages and working conditions were improved. Rather than do this, however, growers maintained their illicit labor networks and increased them to new proportions. The precipitous growth of the undocumented population naturally met with inflammatory rhetoric from politicians and pundits, and this unease had its impact on legislation eventually.

Ultimately, the IRCA emerged from these considerations. The 1965 rollover in immigration policy left an unstable dynamic in labor migration, and once in the 1970s economic hardship returned to the United States, old cultural discourses of exclusion boiled over. In 1979, the Carter administration oversaw the beginning of an investigation into undocumented migration that carried into the 1980s, and ended up recommending three provisions to dealing with the problem: employer sanctions for those hiring undocumented workers, amnesty and legal residency for undocumented residents of the United States, and a closing of “back door” (illicit) migration coupled with a slight opening of “front door” (legal) migration. These provisions formed the bedrock of the IRCA, signed into law by President Reagan in 1986 (Bean and Khuu 2020).

The unintended consequences of this law were momentous, and set a new direction for US immigration policy. The employer sanctions provision, so long fought for by organized labor, ended up losing most of its teeth in the negotiation process, and consequence were easily avoided by the adoption of new employment practices like subcontracting. These subcontracting systems took advantage of socially connected migrants, who acted as labor brokers and crew bosses. These crew bosses were typically migrants with a long migration history, some with legal status gained through IRCA. They were slightly more secure than the routine waves of young, poor,

indebted and socially isolated male migrants that made up the bulk of migration flows, and they had connections with employers as well as migrants (Horton 2016). All wages were paid on a group contract, and dispersed by the crew bosses. This intermediate layer between migrants and companies insulated the latter and made the former even more expendable—competition within and between crews was harsh, and anyone caught slacking or taking breaks (even to use the bathroom or drink water) was castigated not only by their boss, but by their crewmates as well (Horton 2016; Holmes 2013).

IRCA's sanctions operated by mandating paperwork checks, but ones that were easily avoided. Crew bosses often worked as “identity” brokers as well as labor brokers, connecting undocumented migrants with fake or borrowed documents (Horton 2016). Working under somebody else's name or social security number was an easy way to get around document checks—and, it accrued benefits to the person whose identity was being used, making loaning ones legal documents out a popular side hustle for migrants with legal status.

IRCA also attempted to “close the back door” of undocumented migration by increasing Border Patrol funding and beginning the militarization of the southern border. Halting undocumented migration was to some degree always a pipe dream (see Andreas 2000) but it was still effective political rhetoric, and engaged those cultural representation of the “migration threat” that had fueled IRCA in the first place. This made life more and more difficult for migrants, heightening their risk of deportation. It also began to make crossing the border more expensive, which in the short term had relatively few impacts, but within a decade had driven up the cost of border smuggling significantly (Massey et al. 2003). By adding to the debt burden of undocumented migrants, this made them intensely vulnerable to exploitation (Horton 2016).

Often times it was crew bosses or other social connections who provided loans for migrants to pay smugglers, and migrants entered the country indebted to their employers.

Heightened danger and costs to border crossing also discouraged circular migration, favoring permanent residency for migrants, an ironic consequence (Massey et al. 2003). This and other consequences of the IRCA were exacerbated by subsequent legislation in the 1990s that dramatically heightened border militarization (through such programs as Operation Gatekeeper, among others), further excluded migrants from public services (see for example the 1996 IIRIRA), and added criminal status to many activities when they were performed by undocumented migrants. This is why it is useful to speak of the IRCA as beginning a new “regime” of migration policy—many of the tendencies first legally codified in IRCA were intensified under subsequent legislation, but the pattern was the same. As demand for migrant farm labor remained relatively constant, state restrictions grew, making the supply more and more vulnerable, precarious and exploitable.

Concurrent to these changes in migration policy were yet another round of economic reforms in Mexico, these of a distinctly neoliberal nature. The integration of the US and Mexican economies that began with the 1982 debt crisis and culminated in NAFTA left millions, especially in the countryside, with no ability to support themselves aside from migration (Barry, 1995). The new Mexican economy was structured in what Delgado-Wise and coauthors have called the “cheap-labor export-led model,” with economic enclave (*maquiladora*) manufacturing and migration as the two primary forms of labor export (Delgado-Wise and Covarrubias, 2007; Delgado-Wise and Cypher, 2007).

Over the course of the 1990s, the atmosphere of hostility in the US grew hotter and hotter, with such movements as the “Save Our State” initiative in California propelling

themselves through xenophobic rhetoric. The adoption of “Prevention Though Deterrence” policies lead to the deaths of countless migrants by blockading urban ports of entry, and guiding migrants into the most dangerous parts of the border. Violence by indirect means was the toolkit of this policy set, using landscapes as weapons against migrants (Slack et al. 2016). The United States federal government in this period, following Jason de Leon (2015:84), “knowingly created a border security infrastructure that puts people in harm’s way.” After 9/11, this militarization took on the mantle of anti-terrorism, with undocumented migrants increasingly being cast as dangers to society, criminals, and potential terrorists. The creation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2002, which took responsibility for border security from the INS, lead to a skyrocketing in budget and the development of what has been called the “Immigration Industrial Complex” (Golash-Boza 2009a, 2009b; Trujillo-Pagan 2014) This new phase in the disciplining of migrants extended the same model of segmentation to new heights, and turned it into a billion-dollar industry.

Discussion

In examining evidence of migrant farm labor segmentation in the United States, several important variables become visible. Each of these variables evolved throughout the period analyzed, and had a consequent effect on the changing structure of market segmentation in the period. By tracing their historical trajectories, I hope to paint a dynamic picture of migrant farm labor’s segmentation since WWII, which can then be analyzed using the violence continuum.

Demand-side Factors

Demand factors have been strong and long-standing. Unfree labor had long played an important role in the agricultural economy of the American South, and though the model of

guaranteeing this labor had changed in different periods, the need has not gone away (Henderson 2011). As David Bacon (2008:90) has it, “U.S. Agriculture is addicted to a vast reservoir of cheap labor... African Americans made up the rural labor force of the south, first as slaves, then as sharecroppers and tenant farmers, and finally as wage laborers.” In the southwestern United States, industrial agriculture has, especially since the Bracero program, relied on immigrant labor from south of the border. Industrial agriculture requires high volumes of short-term laborers in order to make a profit, and high control over that labor is key to success. Stalling during the harvest season can cost thousands to millions of dollars in lost crops, and thus labor agitation represents a serious threat. For this reason, growers always wanted more laborers than necessary, preferably ones that could be easily divided and did not have access to political representation. Employment practices also play an important role in market structures, through such means as guestworker programs, employee recruitment, and contracting systems. Guestworker programs are one of the most interesting forms of labor market segmentation, because they are performed with direct state and private cooperation, and because they institutionalize otherwise informal systems of labor regulation. The transition from formal guestworker programs to informal and undocumented migration is of interest as well, and discussed below.

Supply-side factors

Before migrants ever cross the border, legally or otherwise, they have already gone through many experiences which pushed them in this direction. Mexico’s tumultuous economic history during the 20th century led to the economic displacement of millions, uprooted first by Mexico’s dreams of modernization, then by the failure of that dream, and finally by the new solution of economic integration embraced in the 1980s. This cross-generational pattern of migration left a strong legacy in rural Mexico, where migration became an expectation for many.

Many former farmers, forced to abandon their farms by agribusiness competition, chose farm labor as a way to maintain their attachment to the land. The conjunction of this with a migrant habitus (Wacquant 2016; Holmes 2013), passed down from parents to children, pushed generation after generation into the same kinds of jobs. For those who moved permanently to the United States, this was sometimes escapable—barriers like a lack of education, English-skills, and familiarity with socioeconomic conventions had big impacts on the foreign-born, but little for those who were born or grew up in the United States. This dynamic implies that a rural migrant habitus is a somewhat important variable in the maintenance of labor supply.

State Policy

State policy, by regulating means of formal entry, has a huge influence on the prospects for all migrants. A whole host of legal structures mediate between laborers and employers, shaping the market. Guestworker programs are one such structure. A lack of guestworker programs, coupled with restrictive immigration policy, form another. Constructions of citizenship (and all the rights that go with it, such as unemployment insurance, education, and access to healthcare) are not written in stone, and they have evolved significantly over the course of the last century. The flip side of noncitizenship is deportability, even for those with legal status. This deportability has long been an asset of employers of undocumented labor, allowing for harsh discipline of their workforce alongside endemic abuse and outright wage theft. While this doesn't mean that the state can truly prevent entry, it can greatly shape the experience of migrants once they are here, legal or otherwise. The state can also exert a degree of influence over growers, though control would be a generous term. For example, growers fought tooth and nail against the inclusion of the employer sanctions provision in the 1986 IRCA, which penalized employers who used undocumented labor (Choe 2001). Nevertheless, the provision was

included, albeit in a porous way that allowed for easy avoidance. Agribusiness adapted to this change in legal landscape not by hiring fewer undocumented workers; instead it prompted a shift in employment practices to avoid accountability under the law. So, while the state may attempt to influence different actors in the market, ultimately this influence is almost always circumnavigable and produces unintended outcomes.

It is also important not to forget the existence of cultural and representational practices that shape distinctions between groups, create social norms that regulate employment expectations, and limit what is and is not possible for different groups of people. The concept of habitus was briefly mentioned above, and it also falls into this category. Racial ideologies have played a profound role in the history of Mexican migration to the United States, and the mapping of ethnic hierarchies, citizenship hierarchies, and workplace hierarchies onto one another is of profound importance to segmentation (Holmes 2013, Bourgois 1988). Cultural practices have a recursive element, in that they constitute the social fields that influence state policy, industrial structures, labor supply formation, etc. Given the relationship between anti-immigrant xenophobia and restrictive immigration practices, and between the latter and segmentation in migrant labor markets, cultural and representational practices deserve serious consideration in this analysis.

Theoretical Synthesis: Violence and Segmentation

Having reviewed the historical details of how segmentation has worked in the instance of migrant farm labor, we can now look to understanding the role of violence in this process. There is good reason to say that violence, of various sorts, is what makes migrant farm labor's segmentation possible. Migrants navigate a landscape of violent practices that define their

choices, and guide them into particular forms of employment that are in turn structured by violence.

The first key form of violence to consider is the indirect violence of uneven development that undermined rural livelihoods in each of the periods discussed, limiting opportunities for survival in the traditional means. Rural development, through such projects as the Green Revolution, relies on the disruption of extant socio-environmental arrangements to progress. The transfer of rural populations from independent subsistence communities to wage-labor markets by economic force is the basic driver of out-migration in many cases, producing the proto-segmented labor pools necessary for segmentation to occur. This type of violence is structural in Galtung's (1969,1975) sense as well as the one outlined in this paper.

The violence of uneven development drove migrants into the Bracero Program, seeking new sources of subsistence in a high-unemployment society. However, those programs too were laced with violent practices such as abuse, wage-withholding, racism, and requirements to work in dangerous conditions and to live in unhealthy ones. These were forms of direct violence that were perceived as justified given the racial hierarchies misrecognized by employers and laborers alike as natural—symbolic violence. This symbolic violence became embedded in a cross-generational habitus that understood and expected abuse as normal, and lead new generations into the same kinds of arrangements. While racism and abuse within farm labor was endemic, beyond farm work migrant labor was even more marginalized and not accepted for a very long time. Mexicans were associated with a particular section of the labor hierarchy, as well as a particular section of the citizenship hierarchy, and deviating from this position heightened their abuse. During the Bracero period, it was outright illegal for Mexican laborers to work outside agriculture in many instances. The growth of undocumented migration under the Bracero period

and in following years redefined these hierarchies in new terms, and with new cultural representations. As new rounds of uneven development in Mexico occurred under neoliberalism, volumes of migration ballooned, and these cultural representations gained more and more power. Today, what Hagan, Levi and Dinovitzer (2008) have called the “Crime-Immigration Nexus” continues to drive this process.

Anti-immigrant rhetoric and deportation practices serve as a helpful example. Under the Bracero Program, deportation was used by employers strategically, as a means of disciplining workers and keeping them vulnerable. In order to accomplish this, a discourse of the dangers of undocumented migration had to be constructed, and undocumented migrants associated with danger and criminality. A consequence of this was genuine concern over undocumented migration in the population, which boiled over once in the 50s, prompting Operation Wetback, again in 70s, prompting the IRCA, again in the 1990s, prompting Operation Gatekeeper and its ilk, and yet again after 9/11. In each instance, acts of direct violence were performed by specific actors out of convenience and a perceived opportunity at extra profits, but in each instance violent practices got away from those employing them and took on a life of their own. Over time, structures emerged which sustain these citizenship-workplace hierarchies and practices of enforced precarity, such as deportation. The “Immigration Industrial Complex” is a terrifying example of how this has run amok in immigration policy, with billions of dollars being spent each year with little show for it except thousands dead along the border, and thousands more in detention facilities (Trujillo-Pagan, 2013; Golash-Boza, 2009a, 2009b). The criminalization of migration has other violent consequences on migrants’ lives, beyond the immediate threat of deportation. Horton (2016) has documented the effects of the chronic stress of undocumented living in conjunction with farmwork. Since the mid-1990s, the systematic exclusion of migrants

from basic social services, such as social security, education and healthcare, constitutes an egregious violation of human rights and a system of indirect violence.

The reliance of these kinds of labor markets on proto-segmented labor pools is also of interest. While obviously industrial agriculture did not bring about economic disruption in Mexico so as to exploit the peasants displaced by this process, it is significant that without that displacement, another source of it would have been necessary. This implies that, while segmentation clearly operates at different scales from such long-run processes as uneven national development, it relies on these processes to work. In other words, structures of segmented labor markets develop under conditions of violence, and thus they require ongoing violence as time goes on to be sustained.

Conclusion

What use is this knowledge? If it is true that the profitability of industrial agriculture is linked to segmented markets, which are in turn linked to ongoing violent practices, we cannot truly hope to eliminate violent practices without dismantling those structures within our societies that rely on them—but this is not enough. We are dependent upon social structures, such as unjust labor markets, for our very survival, and escaping our dependence on violent practices is a positive project as well as a negating one. New structures must be erected which both meet the needs of people and do not rely on violence for their ongoing survival. For those concerned specifically with immigrant livelihoods and rights, developing an alternative agricultural model would go a long way to dealing with violent practices that marginalize migrants from our society through such symbolic violences as racism. An alternative model of agriculture that does not require violence to sustain itself is perhaps very far away from our current reality, but it does exist. One of the key barriers to change within agriculture is the lack of political voice for those

who are most intimately connected with the injustices of that system—namely, migrants. Giving political voice and power to migrant farm laborers would allow for more equitable forms of agricultural production to emerge. This is the first, but not the only step in ridding our production systems of violence.

There is a temptation, demonstrated well by Holmes, to identify the violence experienced by migrants under this system as without an agent. This problem is the intellectual child of Farmer's structural violence concept, which sought to show how those individuals were suffering from their inequalities as much as their infections. While Farmer was undoubtedly right in a certain sense (it is equally inaccurate to blame victims of poverty for the condition as it is to blame abstract structure), displacing blame (and therefore, in a sense, agency) onto structures is self-defeating. Following Wacquant, what good may come of adopting "a concept that somehow diffuses responsibility in order to expand its ambit" (Wacquant, 2004:322)?

Holmes and Farmer both propose an approach to addressing the issues they analyze, what they call pragmatic solidarity. By joining with the everyday struggles of the oppressed, it is argued, we can begin to denaturalize their social suffering. Holmes goes a step further in his admiration for a friend whose public advocacy for migrants resulted in her loss of employment, and whose solidarity "went beyond the pragmatic to challenge power structures and representations that are harmful to migrant farmworkers" (Holmes 2013:192). What is powerful about this approach is that it (correctly) observes that acts of human agency in opposition to oppressive structures are the only thing capable of changing these structures. Conversely, what prolongs the existence of unjust structures is acts of human agency which reify and support them. Pragmatic solidarity must involve recognizing the ways in which our lives and habitus are dependent, in a sense, on the suffering of others; how the fresh fruits we eat are predicated on the

broken bodies of migrants. Illuminating the history of this bargain, and denaturalizing the oppressive structures which sustain it, must also examine where, in every instance, acts of violence which continue to structure our societies are located—and they are not located in the abstract realm of social structures, as Holmes and Farmer maintain, but in the concrete realm of human interaction and human choice.

References Cited

Andreas, Peter

2000 *Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide*. London: Cornell University Press.

Bacon, David

2008 *Illegal People: How Globalization Creates Migration and Criminalizes Immigrants*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press Books.

Barry, Tom

1995 *Zapata's Revenge: Free Trade and the Farm Crisis in Mexico*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

Bean, Frank D., and Thoa Khuu

2020 The Context and Consequences of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). In *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming.

Bourdieu, Phillipe and Loïc Wacquant

2004 Symbolic Violence. In *Violence in War and Peace*, Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes, editors. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Bourgois, Phillipe

1988 Conjugated Oppression: Class and Ethnicity Among Guaymi and Kuna Banana Workers. *American Ethnologist*, 15: 328-348.

2001 The Power of Violence in War and Peace: Post-Cold War Lessons from El Salvador. *Ethnography*, 2(1): 5–34.

Bourgois, Phillipe and Nancy Scheper-Hughes, editors

2004 *Violence in War and Peace*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Burawoy, Michael

1976 The Functions and Reproduction of Migrant Labor: Comparative Material from Southern Africa and the United States. *American Journal of Sociology*, 81(5): 1050-1087.

Choe, Chang-Soo

2001 Public Policy Making and Interest Group Politics in the U.S: An Analysis of IRCA. *International Area Review*, 4(1): 89-99.

De Leon, Jason

2015 *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Delgado-Wise, Raul, and Humberto Márquez Covarrubias

2007 The Reshaping of Mexican Labor Exports under NAFTA: Paradoxes and Challenges. *International Migration Review*, 41(3): 656–679.

Delgado-Wise, Raul, and James M. Cypher

2007 The Strategic Role of Mexican Labor under NAFTA: Critical Perspectives on Current Economic Integration. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 610(1): 119–142.

Doeringer, Peter B. and Michael J. Piore

1971 *Internal Labor Markets and Manpower Analysis*. Lexington, MA: Heath.

Farmer, Paul

1996 On Suffering and Structural Violence. *Daedalus*, 125(1): 261-283.

2004 An Anthropology of Structural Violence. *Current Anthropology*, 45(3): 305-325.

Galtung, Johan

1969 Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3): 167-191.

1975 *Peace: research, education, action*. Copenhagen: Ejlers.

Golash-Boza, Tanya

2009a The Immigration Industrial Complex: Why We Enforce Immigration Policies Destined to Fail. *Sociology Compass*, 3(2): 295-309.

2009b A Confluence of Interests in Immigration Enforcement: How Politicians, the Media, and Corporations Profit from Immigration Policies Destined to Fail. *Sociology Compass*, 3(2): 283-294.

Gordon, David M.

1972 *Theories of Poverty and Underemployment*. Lexington, MA: Heath.

Gordon, David M., Richard C. Edwards, and Michael Reich

1982 *Segmented Work, Divided Workers: The Historical Transformation of Labor in the United States*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Hagan, John, Ron Levi, and Ronit Dinovitzer

2008 The Symbolic Violence of the Crime-Immigration Nexus: Migrant Mythologies in the Americas. *Criminology & Public Policy*. 7: 95-112.

Henderson, Timothy J.

2011 *Beyond Borders: A History of Mexican Migration to the United States*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Holmes, Seth

2013 *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies : Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press

Horton, Sarah Bronwen

2016 *They Leave Their Kidneys in the Fields: Illness, Injury, and Illegality among U.S. Farm Workers*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Kerr, Clark

1954 The Balkanization of Labor Markets. In *Labor Mobility and Economic Opportunity*, Edward Wight Bakke, editor, pp. 92-110. New York, NY: Wiley.

Marsden, David

1986 *The End of Economic Man? Custom and Competition in Labor Markets*. Brighton: Wheatsheaf.

Massey, Douglas S., Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone

2003 *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Mize, Ronald L. and Alicia C. S. Swords

2011 *Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Ngai, Mae M.

2004 *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Peck, Jamie

1996 *Work-Place: The Social Regulation of Labor Markets*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Reich, Michael, David M. Gordon and Richard C. Edwards

1973 A theory of labor market segmentation. *American Economic Review*, 63: 359-365.

Rubery, Jill

1992 Productive Systems, international integration and the single European market. In *International Integration and Labor Market Organization*, Andrene Castro, Phillipe Mehaut, and Jill Rubery, editors, pp. 244-261. London: Academic Press.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy

1992 *Death Without Weeping*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Slack, Jeremy, Daniel E. Martínez, Alison Elizabeth Lee and Scott Whiteford

2016 The Geography of Border Militarization: Violence, Death and Health in Mexico and the United States. *Journal of Latin American Geography*, 15(1): 7–32.

Trujillo-Pagan, Nicole

2014 Emphasizing the ‘Complex’ in the ‘Immigration Industrial Complex.’ *Critical Sociology*, 40(1): 29-46.

Wacquant, Loïc

2004 Comments on An Anthropology of Structural Violence by Paul Farmer, 2004. *Current Anthropology*, 45(3): 322.

2016 A Concise Genealogy and Anatomy of Habitus. *The Sociological Review*, 64(1): 64–72.